

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 ACDA-05 AID-05 MC-02 EB-07 CAB-02 COME-00

DOT-00 FAA-00 SCCT-01 USSS-00 PC-01 SCA-01 OPR-02

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R 121549Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9281

INFO AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L OUAGADOUGOU 0590

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, ML, UV

SUBJECT: MALI-UPPER VOLTA BORDER DISPUTE

1. FRENCH AMBASSADOR BLANC TELLS ME THAT LOME MEDIATION COMMISSION IS NOT DOING WELL AND THAT HE IS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT CHANCES FOR PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF MALI-UPPER VOLTA BORDER DISPUTE. ACCORDING TO REPORTS HE HAS RECEIVED FROM OTHER FRENCH EMBASSIES IN NEARBY COUNTRIES, ALL MAPS AND DOCUMENTS STUDIED BY MEDIATION COMMISSION CLEARLY SHOW THAT CONTESTED AREA IS WITHIN VOLTAN TERRITORY. THIS, OF COURSE, HAS STRENGTHENED GOUV'S DETERMINATION NOT TO AGREE TO ANY COMPROMISE. ONLY ARGUMENT LEFT TO MALI AT THIS TIME IS THAT CONTESTED AREA IS INHABITED BY MALIANS, BUT IT WOULD BE LIKE OPENING PANDORA'S BOX IF OAU WERE TO

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ACDEPT SUCH ARGUMENT SINCE THERE ARE MANY AFRICAN

COUNTRIES WHERE SIMILAR PROBLEMS EXIST.

2. TO MAKE MATTER WORSE, MALI STILL REFUSES TO RECEIVE MILITARY SUBCOMMISSION AND CONTINUES TO SEND PATROLS INTO CONTESTED AREA AND EVEN BEYOND. WE HAVE IT FROM A RELIABLE SOURCE THAT A FEW DAYS AGO A MALIAN PATROL CROSSED THE BEI RIVER AND CHASED THE VOLTAN SUB-PREFECT OF GOROM-GOROM WHO WAS MAKING AN INSPECTION ON THE VOLTAN SIDE OF THE CONTESTED AREA. THE MALIANS REPORTEDLY PENETRATED WITHIN 15 KMS OF GOROM-GOROM.

3. ANOTHER RELIABLE SOURCE TELLS US THAT PRESIDENT LAMIZANA HAS INFORMED PRESIDENT SENGHOR OF SENEGAL THAT HE WILL NOT ATTEND THE CEAO SUMMIT MEETING AT LONG AS BORDER DISPUTE IS NOT SETTLED. THE SUMMIT MEETING IS SCHEDULED TO BE HELD IN NIAMEY AT THE BEGINNING OF APRIL AND IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER UPPER VOLTA WILL BE REPRESENTED BY A LOWER RANKING OFFICIAL..

4. MEANWHILE UPPER VOLTA CONTINUES TO RECEIVE ARMS AND AMMUNITION FROM UNKNOWN SOURCES. SEVERAL DAYS AGO, AN AMERICAN GIRL WAS DETAINED FOR SEVERAL HOURS AT AIRPORT BECAUSE SHE SAW A LARGE NUMBER OF CASES WITH GERMAN MARKINGS BEING UNLOADED FROM TWO CHARTERED (ONE WAS AIR AFRIQUE AND OTHER WAS UNMARKED DC-8) PLANES. WE HAVE REPORTS ALSO THAT PAN AFRICAN AIRLINES AND SEABORG WORLD AIRLINES HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN ARMS AIRLIFT. WE ARE TOLD THAT THESE FLIGHTS ORIGINATE IN HAMBURG, PARIS OR ABIDJAN. NEW SECURITY PROCEDURES HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED AT AIRPORT SO THAT PASSENGERS IN REGULAR AIR AFRIQUE AND UTA FLIGHTS REMAIN ON BOARD UNTIL MYSTERTIOUS CASES ARE UNLOADED FROM THE PLANES. FRG AMBASSADOR VERGAU TELLS ME HE HAS IT FROM A RELIABLE SOURCE THAT THE IVORY COAST HAS LOANED UPPER VOLTA 15 LIGHT ARMORED CARS. THIS WOULD BRING TO 30 THE NUMBER OF SUCH VEHICLES OF FRENCH MANUFACTURE AVAILABLE TO THE VOLTAN ARMY BUT ACCORDING TO VERGAU'S DRIVER, WHO HAS BEEN CALLED BACK AND WHO IS PRESENTLY ASSIGNED TO A NEWLY FORMED ARMORED COMPANY, THE VOLTANS HAVE OTHER ARMORED CARS WHICH ARE NOT OF FRENCH MANUFACTURE.

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5. FROM VARIOUS SOURCES, WE GATHER THAT THE STRENGTH OF THE VOLTAN ARMY HAS NOW BEEN BROUGHT TO 6000 MEN. THE MAIN ARMY BARRACKS AT BOBO DIOULASSO AND OUAGADOUGOU ARE NOW REPORTEDLY ALMOST DESERTED AND THE TROOPS HAVE BEEN POSITIONED ALL ALONG THE MALI-UPPER VOLTA BORDER AT ORODARA, NOUNA, OUHAHIGOUYA, DJIBO AND DORI. ACCORDING TO A GERMAN HYDROLOGIST, WHO IS STILL ALLOWED

TO OPERATE IN AREA NORTH OF DORI, THERE ARE 800 TROOPS
IN THE GOROM-GOROM AREA.

6. ALL OF THIS, OF COURSE, LEADS US TO BELIEVE THAT
THE VOLTANS ARE ACTIVELY PREPARING FOR AN OFFENSIVE.
THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT PRESSURE IS BUILDING UP FOR
PRESIDENT LAMIZANA TO DO SOMETHING. MEDIATION COMMIS-
SION EFFORTS HAVE BEEN WITHOUT RESULTS. MEANWHILE
THOUSANDS OF VOLTAN VETERANS WHO HAVE BEEN RECALLED
HAVE TO BE FED AND VOLTAN PUBLIC, HAVING ALREADY PAID
THE WAR TAX IN JANUARY AND FEBRUARY, IS WONDERING WHAT
IS GOING ON. THERE IS CONSIDERABLE GRUMBLING AMONG
FORMER POLITICIANS AND YOUNGER ARMY OFFICERS AGAINST
LAMIZANA'S MODERATE POLICIES. WITH RAINY SEASON
STARTING AT END OF MAY, THERE IS BARELY TWO MONTHS LEFT
THIS YEAR DURING WHICH MILITARY OPERATIONS COULD TAKE
PLACE IN THE CONTESTED ZONE. OTHERWISE, GOUV WOULD
HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL NOVEMBER BEFORE ROADS WOULD AGAIN
BECOME USABLE. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT LAMIZANA REGIME
WOULD BE PERMITTED TO LAST THAT LONG.

7. UNFORTUNATELY WE HAVE NO HARD INFORMATION BUT,
PUTTING TOGETHER WHAT LITTLE INFORMATION WE HAVE, WE
COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT, WITHIN THE NEXT TWO
MONTHS, THE VOLTANS WILL TAKE MATTERS INTO THEIR OWN
HANDS AND ATTEMPT TO RECONQUER THEIR LOST TERRITORIES
OR AT LEAST MAKE POLITICALLY ACCEPTABLE SHOW OF FORCE.
MOST OF MY DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES AGREE WITH THIS
ASSESSMENT.
GRAHAM

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